



INTERNATIONAL RANGER FEDERATION

INTERNATIONAL RANGER FEDERATION STATEMENT

**A Statement for the UNFCCC COP26, Glasgow, United Kingdom, November 2021 CBD
COP15, Kunming, April 2022**

Context: The two interconnected global emergencies

Well protected and conserved areas play a transformative role in addressing the dual crises of climate change and biodiversity loss. Both crises are inextricably linked and cannot be solved one without the other. Restoring ecosystems is a promising strategy to reduce carbon emissions while conserving biodiversity. If the international community, governments and private sector, commit to invest in carbon offsetting programs in protected and conserved areas along with supporting rangers as frontline conservation workers, the dual current crisis could improve significantly.

Rangers as planetary health workers

Rangers play a critical role in the conservation of protected and conserved areas; they are responsible for safeguarding nature, and cultural and historical heritage, and protecting the rights and well-being of present and future generations. As frontline workers, they monitor, manage and interpret the importance of our natural environments and carry out law enforcement to maintain the integrity of protected and conserved area, often under testing conditions, for extended periods, with poor support and remuneration. They also provide services directly aligned to fulfill conservation and climate change targets; by building and maintaining trust and respectful relationships with local communities, providing education and information for visitors, and managing and controlling environmental risks while providing assistance during emergencies (many related to the climate crisis). Rangers are indeed our planetary health frontline workers, who ensure the safekeeping of carbon sinks, biodiversity and vital yet threatened ecosystem services for humanity's well-being.

However, whilst Rangers carry out their essential work to address these critical issues, they are also coming under increasing threat as can be seen by the number of rangers who are dying as a result of homicides annually (see <https://www.internationalrangers.org/meet-our-rangers/#roll-of-honour>). This was recently recognized by the IUCN in the World Conservation Congress Marseille Manifesto (2021), *“Around the world those working to defend the environment are under attack. This includes communities and frontline workers like rangers. IUCN commits to work to protect environmental defenders”*



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During an 11-month period between 2020 and 2021, the IRF recorded 120 Ranger deaths in the line of duty due to homicides, wildlife attacks, motor accidents, and other daily threats to their safety, in addition to at least a further 500 ranger deaths due to

COVID-19. These numbers are likely lower than the actual number of ranger deaths as many go unrecorded. Moreover, in the last 10 years (2011-2021) we are recording more illness related ranger deaths (such as heart attacks which could be associated with increased stresses in the workplace) and an increase in work-related deaths due to the extreme hazards encountered during patrols, a lack of accredited training and/or organisational support and sub-standard equipment to deal with their frequently dangerous work environment.

Our commitment to the climate agenda:

The International Ranger Federation (IRF), the official body representing rangers around the world with 103 ranger associations across 7 regions worldwide, will continue to:

1. Strongly support rangers who protect and preserve all aspects of wild areas and cultural sites including fundamental carbon sinks found in different ecosystems in land and sea.
2. Raise the profile of rangers around the essential role they play as frontline workers in mitigating climate change impacts and biodiversity loss to the benefit of humanity.
3. Be a firm voice for rangers to ensure that they are properly resourced and at the forefront in all global climate change and biodiversity loss solutions.
4. Harness the necessary support to prevent climate change and biodiversity loss related deaths
5. Foster integrated partnerships between global organisations to invest in a well-supported, effective and capacitated ranger sector.

We urge decision makers to note that during the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 of the Convention on Biological Diversity, rangers played a critical role fulfilling Aichi Target 11, one of the only targets accomplished and with minimum recognition to this sector.

Now with much more ambitious international targets to address the climate and biodiversity crises, such as the 30x30 initiative indicates, **the IRF calls for:**

1. Governments, NGO's and all communities to recognize and support rangers as planetary health professionals like any other frontline essential workforce (e.g. healthcare professionals);
2. An increase in the number and capacity of Rangers globally, if we are to have any chance of attaining new global climate or biodiversity targets;



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3. The improvement of Ranger working conditions, standards, and safety at different levels;
4. Increased investment in the training and equipping of Rangers to reduce risk to themselves and to increase ranger efficiency and effectiveness;
5. Existing and new protected and conserved areas to be managed effectively with sufficient resources, capacity, will and commitment to achieve their outcomes in the long-term and avoid paper parks.

The IRF believes that effective conservation measures to mitigate climate change and biodiversity loss can only happen with well-supported rangers on the ground. The biodiversity and the climate crises we face are human induced challenges and therefore require human induced solutions. Rangers must be seen as the starting point of such global solutions.

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